



Natural Resources Conservation Service
375 Jackson Street, Suite 600
St. Paul, MN 55101-1854

Phone: (651) 602-7900
FAX: (651) 602-7914

Transmitted via email

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MINNESOTA BULLETIN NO. 190-5-1

SUBJECT: ECS – NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATION POLICY

Purpose. To distribute Minnesota's revised policy requiring District Conservationists to become certified Nutrient Management Planners.

Expiration Date. September 30, 2005.

The current Farm Bill continues to add new programs, responsibilities and duties to our agency. These changing responsibilities have also resulted in a steady transition of our technical focus. We have been broadening our technical scope from being heavily weighted toward soil erosion reduction to become more ecologically based and balanced. In order to be able to keep pace with this expanding workload we need to continue to increase the knowledge base and technical skills of our employees.

It is very important for NRCS to continually review our efforts to provide the highest quality technical assistance possible to our clients. Two years ago we initiated a policy that required all District Conservationists to develop and demonstrate their conservation planning skills by becoming Certified Conservation Planners. This year we are continuing our commitment to excellence by requiring that all District Conservationists become Certified Nutrient Management Planners.

Minnesota Amendment 18 to the National Planning Procedures Handbook describes the knowledge, skills, abilities and other criteria needed to become certified in nutrient management. Minnesota Amendment 1 to Part 409 (Conservation Planning) of Title 180 (Ecological Sciences) of the General Manual describes similar criteria needed to become certified to work on nutrient management as part of a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan.

Acquiring certification is a multi-step process including:

Step 1 - Completion of the NEDC "Introduction to Water Quality" course, which is considered a prerequisite to;

Step 2 – Completion of the NEDC "Nutrient and Pest Management Considerations in Conservation Planning" course track 1 "Nutrient Management". Registration for the NEDC courses is accomplished through the NRCS eLearning Center and supervisor approval is required.

The NEDC nutrient management course is comprised of 3 parts: Part 1 is a 6 module self-paced course followed by an on-line test. Part 2 is an in-state facilitated 2-3 day session. Part 3 is the successful completion of an actual on-farm nutrient management plan. Part 2, the in-state facilitated session will be offered in late January 2005 to students who have successfully completed Part 1. Direct course registration questions to Joe Wiltsey, Training Coordinator. Direct course content questions to Jeff St. Ores, Water Quality Specialist.

Attached to this bulletin is the current list of individuals that hold a certificate as a Nutrient Management Planner. I commend each of these individuals. Each ASTC (FO) will review this list and revise all appropriate individual performance and training plans to insure that all District Conservationists achieve status as “provisionally” certified nutrient management planners by the end of FY-2005 and become fully certified by the end of FY-2006.

I am also directing that the position description for all District Conservationists be revised to include the requirement for achieving certification as a nutrient management planner. In addition, all future Minnesota District Conservationist vacancy announcements will contain wording that the successful applicant must have or achieve a nutrient management planner certificate within 12 months of taking that position.

Maintaining a highly skilled technical workforce is mandatory in order to solidify NRCS and your future as the recognized leaders in the conservation technical assistance arena.

WILLIAM HUNT
State Conservationist

Attachment

DIST: AO
FO
Charles Montgomery, SAO, NRCS, St. Paul, MN
Jeff St. Ores, WQS, NRCS, St. Paul, MN
Mary Lou Werner, NRCS, St. Paul, MN
Joe Wiltsey, Training Coordinator, NRCS, Cross Lake, MN